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TAGS: [KPAO](#) [QEXC](#) [SCUL](#) [IZ](#)

SUBJECT: BAGHDAD REQUESTS PARTICIPATION IN THE RHYTHM ROAD AMERICAN MUSIC ABROAD PROGRAM'S NEW SEASON

REF: State 090853

SUMMARY

¶1. (U) Embassy Baghdad requests participation in the Rhythm Road American Music Abroad Program during the winter of 2009, preferably at the end of February. Post would like to host a Jazz quartet, for a total of six programming days. Our audience will consist of important mission contacts, including some our strongest NGO partners both in Baghdad and in the provinces who have limited access to live American cultural performances. End summary.

PROGRAM OVERVIEW

¶2. (U) Post proposes a six-day program, not counting travel days, featuring the group on tour both performing and conducting educational workshops in a variety of venues. Day 1 will start with a presentation at the University of Baghdad's School of Music to illustrate different jazz styles to the students. Later that day, the group will link up with the Tawasin Cultural Assembly to trade ideas in a fusion working session combining jazz with traditional Iraqi music. On Day 2, the group will fly to Najaf Province where they will give a workshop to the students of Kufa University followed by a concert performance in the city of Najaf later that day. On Day 3, the group will fly to Anbar Province for a workshop demonstration and performance at a local middle or high school and then return to Baghdad that same day. On Day 4 the group will co-present, with the Tawasin Assembly, a workshop and performance for disabled youth connected with the Iraq Handicapped Society. The rest of the day and all of Day 5 will be a practice session with the Tawasin Assembly preparing for the final large scale public concert, which will be held on Day 6 at the Al-Rasheed Hotel in the International Zone in Baghdad. Post's preferred week for this schedule would be beginning on Monday, February 23rd but we can push it forward to the first week of March, if necessary.

- PUBLIC DIPLOMACY THROUGH CULTURAL EXCHANGE

¶3. (U) The American-Iraq relationship is steadily transforming into a more normal bilateral relationship based upon cultural, economic and political ties. Cultural exchange, including bringing American performers to Iraq, is a key component of this transformation. Post has not taken advantage of the Rhythm Road program previously. However, with a progressively more stable security environment, we believe this is the right time to bring American performers to Baghdad and the provinces to showcase American culture. A direct exposure to American arts is critical to creating mutual understanding between the citizens of the United States and Iraq.

- INVOLVING YOUNG AND DISABLED PEOPLE

¶4. (U) Iraq has two generations of youth whose major understanding of life is through the lens of violence and war. The physical and psychological legacy of this history is evident in many of the young people here. There is an opportunity for the Embassy to provide an

outlet for mending bodies and minds through music. We intend to host performances and workshops with college level as well as younger students. We also are directing attention to those young people who are disabled and who have limited options in encountering interactive cultural programming and meeting Americans.

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INVOLVING LOCAL MUSICIANS

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¶5. (U) Due to Iraq's political isolation during much of the last thirty years, intellectual, educational and cultural exchanges have been severely limited. Iraq's unique musical traditions have not been widely exposed to Western audiences and vice versa. With a new openness in cultural expression occurring in the country, there is a desire from Iraqi performers to seek out new forms of musical identity and the blending of jazz and traditional music is a potential realization towards this ideal. Tawasin Cultural Assembly is one of Baghdad's premier arts organizations and the Assembly's musicians would be essential agents in helping the Embassy traverse boundaries to more dynamically interact with local audiences.

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ITINERARY

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¶6. (U) The proposed itinerary follows:

-- Sunday, February 22: Quartet arrives Baghdad.

-- Monday February 23: Presentation to students at the University of Baghdad followed by a private working session with the Tawasin Cultural Assembly.

-- Tuesday, February 24: Flight to Najaf province and presentation to students at University of Kufa followed by a performance in Najaf.

-- Wednesday, February 25: Flight to Anbar province and performance at local school. Flight to Erbil province.

-- Thursday, February 26: Workshop and performance for students held in conjunction with Kurdish musical faculty in Erbil or the American University Iraq-Salmaniya.

-- Friday, February 27: Return to Baghdad to host workshop and performance with Tawasin Cultural Assembly for disabled children followed by private working session and practice with Tawasin members.

-- Saturday, February 28: General performance with Tawasin Cultural Assembly at the Al-Rasheed Hotel in Baghdad.

-- Sunday, March 1: Quartet leaves Baghdad for next post.

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POST SUPPORT

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¶7. (U) Post is prepared to generate the audience, build partnerships with local co-hosting organizations, provide translation, lodging, meals, security, in-country transportation and address all technical aspects associated with this program. For planning purposes, post will need a list of musicians, baggage including instruments/equipment, with weights as soon as it is available.

CROCKER